viet aircraft supercarrier 'Varyag' as alleged by Western Naval Intelligence sources;

(b) what is the estimated cost of this ship;

(c) whether any negotiations have been held with the present Russian Government in this matter; if so, their reaction thereto;

(d) whether Government's attention has also been invited to the news item captioned "Ukraine sold off Cruiser to India" appearing in the Hindustan Times', New Delhi, dated 19th February, 1992; and

(e) if so, the fact of the matter and his reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) The Government have seen the news items which appeared in the Economic Times/Hindustan Times regarding the possible sale of an Aircraft Carrier/Cruisers by Ukraine to the Indian Navy. These reports are without any basis.

"Dry Dock" Project at Bombay

1238. SHRI DHULESHWAR MEENA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has decided to abandon the dry dock project that was coming up in Bombay after spending crores of rupees thereon;

(b) If so, the reasons therefor;

(c) in what manner it is proposed to utilise the Rs. 15 crore first stage of the project already completed; and

(d) what alternative arrangements for the docking of the Naval fleet for repairs and re-fitting have been made or likely to be made?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) A final decision has not so far been taken to abandon the Project.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

"Seabird" Naval Base at Karwar

1239. SHRI J. P. JAVALI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry of Environment has given conditional clearance to the Seabird naval base at Karwar;

(b) whether it is also a fact that work on this project was scheduled to begin in 1988 for completion in 1996; and

(c) if so, the reasons for the delay and what is the revised programme for the completion of the project?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) Phase I of the Project was envisaged for completion in a 10 year time-frame commencing 1985 subject to the completion of the preliminary studies at the site, preparation of the Master Plan/Detailed Project Report, availability of land, grant of environmental clearance and Government sanction of the firm cost estimates of Phase I of the Project. More time than anticipated has been/is being taken in cmpleting the above activities. The Phase I works are not expected to take about 8—10 years for completion after sanction subject to the availability of funds.